A PAGE FOR WOMEN AND THE HOME

THE DAILY SHORT STORY

THE RED PLUSH BARRIER.

BY JANE OSBORN.

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IT WAS a funny thing about Tom Barrow and Martha Brooks, and it was just because every one in town had known them since they were babies that not even the most conventional or the most prudish really took any exception to their housekeeping arrangements. Probably every woman in the town knew that under similar circumstances she would have done exactly the same.

Martha Brooks was old Mrs. Barrow's niece and Tom Marrow was Mr. Barrow's nephew, and, both having been left orphans in their childhood, they had been brought with all the intimacy of brother and sister. Both had become fixtures in the old Barrow homestead. It was conveniently placed for Tom's business and Martha was intimate with the neighborhood. Besides, by the will left by Mrs. Barrow the house was left as joint property so long as both resided there. In case of the failuure of either to live there, the property was to pass to the other. Neither was so well off as to be able lightly to renounce the part ownership of this shelter, so neither had taken the step.

It was nearly a year after the death of Mrs. Barrow had left them the sole tenants of the house, save for an old family servant, that Tom first discussed the subject with Martha.

"If we both hadn't acquired such a strong reputation for humdrum propriety and conventionality," he said, "I think some one might take exception to the arrangement."

Martha raised her graceful eyebrows over a pair of fine, dark eyes, and looked at Tom with an air of mild surprise. "How perfectly ridiculous! As if a woman of thirty-two and a man of thirty-five who have known each other since babyhood and have been brought up in the same house for twenty years couldn't tive together without setting people's tongues wagging."

"Thirty-two," repeated Tom, not quite gallantly. "No, you aren't exactly a girl."

"And every one knows that I don't really care twopence for you."

"That is very kind, I am sure." Tom re-established the paper in front of his place and went on reading. "But you are right. No one can help seeing that we are not of the mold of which affinities are made. Funny—isn't it?—what makes us so indifferent?"

Martha leisurely poured her second cup of coffee. "It isn't so much that, Tom," she said. "It is more that we are absolutely—how shall I say it? perhaps dissimilar in taste will do." She gave a rapid look around the heavily hung dining room and almost shuddered as she did so. "It is that, isn't it?"

"Partly," agreed Tom, "but of course, it is the only thing for us to do, living here together, I mean. We might get a third person in with us for respectability's sake, and I don't know whether I want to burden myself with some one else who might be even less congenial."

"No, unless you were to marry."

Tom didn't answer, and for five minutes he went on reading his paper. Martha continued to sip her coffee and nibble her toast.

"At least," Tom added, as he rose to leave for his business, "we are never seen together anywhere. Goodness knows you are away from home enough without me."

"Yes, and you are here quite as seldom as I am. But don't imagine that I want you to tell me where you go."

Tom went off to his business and Martha went directly to her own room, the only room in the entire house, in fact, which she ever frequented more than was necessary. The drawing room, with its clumsy mahogany furniture and red plush hangings was a nightmare to her. The library, with its shelves of antiquated law books that had belonged to Uncle Tom, appealed no more to her.

In the meantime, Martha had very definite ideas of her own as to what a house should be. It was to be sunny and livable. Instead of heavy funereal chairs and impossible stiff divans, it must possess furniture that was restful and pleasant, windows that were bright and that let in air and sunlight, a library that was intimate and expressive of the personality of the one who used it—books that one read and that others might enjoy—in short, just exactly what the old Barrow library was not.

Martha donned her hat and cloak, and telling the old servant she would not be home for dinner, started out. She walked down the main street of the town, then through an orchard and finally to a little woody retreat in the middle of which was a sunny clearing and a tiny house that might almost have been mistaken for a child's playhouse. In fact, it was a two-room cottage—the secret retreat of Martha. At a touch of her key the door yielded and she entered.

Once inside this house, Martha's entire manner changed. Donning a bright colored smock in place of her coat and hat, she began to set the small place to rights. She built a cozy open fire and arranged the late chrysanthemums she had gathered from the old-fashioned garden at home. Here Martha spent most of her days. Her intimate friends knew of the retreat and were bound to a certain sort of secrecy, though most of them openly discussed the little house among themselves. The chief object of the secrecy was to prevent news of it from getting back to Tom.

"I wouldn't for the world hurt his feelings," she told them. "Tom and I have such absolutely opposite tastes. He just dotes on the old house, with its heavy, dreary rooms. I would no more suggest doing them over than I would having some of those heavy vines and trees cut out that make the place so frightfully dark and sunless. So I have built this place here to be my own. Here, alone, I am happy and contented because here I can have the kind of surroundings I like—cheerfulness, sunlight, individuality and repose."

Sometimes Martha invited one or another of her women friends to spend the day or the morning or an afternoon, but on this occasion, when she had planned to do some sewing, she was alone. In spite of the fact that it was Saturday, when Tom's office closed in the afternoon, she felt no need for a hasty return. It was an assured fact that he would not go home till time for dinner at night. More and more Tom had taken to spending his leisure time away from the old home.

At two o'clock she thought first of luncheon, and although she was to be alone, she opened a gate-leg table before the open fire, spread a luncheon cloth over it and arranged her tempting luncheon of toasted bread and cheese, hot chocolate and late autumn fruit. In spite of the cheerfulness and beauty of the simple surroundings, Martha felt lonely and more than once she felt that she had spoken inconsiderately. She almost wanted to apologize to Tom for having emphasized the fact of their uncongeniality.

Then it was that she heard Tom's knock at the door, for Tom it proved to be—Tom who had gone out for a country tramp and had stopped on the pretext of getting a drink of water.

"I think I felt that there was something suspicious about this cottage," he told her after Martha's hurried, half apologetic, confused explanations. "I've passed this dovecote several times and some how it fitted so thoroughly into my own ideas of happiness and comfort that I decied I'd become acquainted with the owner. Then today I could no longer wait to know, and I trumped up that excuse about wanting a drink of water."

Meantime Martha had opened the little gate-legged table to accommodate two and was spreading an extra place for her uninvited guest.

"You see," Tom went on, "I've taken a sort of dislike to that house of ours, with its heavy vines and its hideous red plush hangings. But—funny thing—I always thought you liked it just the way it was. I think perhaps if I had known all along that it wasn't your ideal of a home I would have felt better acquainted with you. There wasn't any one else in the world but you I could have ways that barrier of red plush and heavy vines. So I rented a wing of an old farmhouse up the road, and manlike and fool that I was, I thought I'd fixed it satisfactorily as a sort of bachelor paradise, where I could spend my leisure time reading and smoking alone or with my friends. Of course I didn't want any one to let you know, because I thought it would offend you to know how I disliked the atmosphere of the old place. So far I have made a failure of my retreat. I wanted it to look like—well, just about like this—books and fireplace and shaded lights and sunshine. But how could a man alone make a home for himself? If I'd only known you didn't care for the old things I might have—"

"Might have what?" Martha came to the rescue.

"Might have suggested doing the old house over and making a real home. What I really mean, Martha, is that I might have asked you long ago to be my wife. I've thought of it a hundred times, and even tried to tell you, but always those red velvet hangings and the damp old vines that keep the house so dark and cheerless seemed to come up between us. But here—Martha, won't you forgive me for not understanding you before, and won't you make me happy always?"

Martha's expression was one of archness mingled with newly awakened sympathy and understanding. "Still," she added, "in spite of those red plush barriers, I think I have been a little bit in love with you for ever so long."

Between Girls

"She says she wishes she could see herself as others see her."

"That's just an excuse for spending a lot of time in front of a mirror."—Kansas City Journal.

The Retort Courteous

Mrs. Uppish—I can assure you there is a great deal hanging on my family tree.

Miss Pert—Some ancestors, for instance?—Baltimore American.

Dilatory.

She—Here is a woman who got married, deserted her husband, and eloped, all in one day.

He—What delayed her?—Life.

DON'T TILT YOUR FALL HAT; IT'LL LOSE ALL STYLE IF YOU DO!

My dears! You must not tip your new fall hat!

It may be as loud as a thunderclap in color, as fantastic in form as a bird cage or milk pail, but do let it sit primly and straightly on your head. That is the way fashion intends the new fall hat to be worn.

This straightness is due to the new straight brim. You will see it every where.

Your Gage sailor is straight; your mushroom and your Toreador with its flare up brim are staid and straight; and each of these hats owes its distinction to the way it balances on your head.

As a little lesson in the law of optics notice the hats in the picture. The Gage hat in the center is on exactly right. In the sketches it is on "any old way," and loses all style in the tilt.

HEALTH HINTS

Dust is harmful when it is present in any quantity for it irritates and inflames the air passages, an irritation which can lead to destruction of lung tissue

Dust prepares the way for the ever alert germs that cause colds, catarrh, influenza and pneumonia.

If tuberculosis germs are in the dust, there lies the danger of the disease entering the lungs of the individual breathing such dust.

People having tuberculosis should remember this and be careful where they expectorate.

House dust is more harmful than street dust.

When sweeping or dusting, proper ventilation is essential.

Rugs are more sanitary than carpets; they allow outdoor cleaning and exposure to sun.

In dusting and sweeping rooms, as little dust as possible should be raised. Feather dusters and dry cloths should never be used.

If a room is carpeted scatter small pieces of damp newspaper over the surface of the carpet before sweeping.

Every precaution should be taken if there is illness in a house, particularly tuberculosis, to prevent the germs of the disease from getting into the air and dust.

HEALTH QUESTION ANSWERED

"What is the best remedy for constipation?"—E. B. K.

Try eating bran bread, more fruit and vegetables, and less meat.

SKIRTS WILL BE LONGER, GIRLS! PEEP INTO BETTY BROWN'S MAIL BRINGS SECRET!

(By BETTY BROWN'S BROTHER.)

Say, girls, I've been opening Betty's mail!

A letter with a French stamp on it came while Betty was in the country for a week-end, and I thought there might be something in it I ought to slip to the (Daily Blank) quick for you to see.

And gosh! there was!

It'll be sad news to the fellows at the cigar store!

And—tell me, girls, will it be sad news to you?

SKIRTS ARE GOING TO BE LONGER!

Not very much longer, just a wee bit longer, which is a big Martial & Armand, which is a big Paris costume house I have heard Betty tell of. So I know this is straight goods.

"Big hips are to be eliminated," Betty's letter says, "and skirts are to be less full. Tendency to enlarge sleeves near shoulder is marked, but not so pronounced as old leg-of-mutton style."

That last reads to me as if they had got Betty mixed up with the live-stock reporter, but may be you can figure out what it means.

But cheer up, you fellows that hang around the cigar store—

Also, perhaps, you girls that pass the cigar store eight or 10 times every afternoon!

The last sentence in Betty's letter says:

"CHANGES NOT TO TAKE EFFECT TILL WINTER."

So for the rest of the summer and fall, fellows, and maybe girls, the cigar store corner will be as popular as ever.

:-: CONFESSIONS OF A WIFE :-:

"Margie," said Paula, "I can't understand the attitude men take toward women.

"A famous neurologist told me that of all the men who came to him those who had fallen in love with their brother's wives were victims of greatest remorse. A lova affair of this sort almost always leads a man to insanity or suicide.

"'By no possibility,' he said, 'can a man feel that the wrongs he does a woman can ever be as great as those he does a man. A man can murder the husband of his sister with less compunction and remorse than he can wrong the wife of his brother.'

"Young as I was then, Margie—I was only 18—I learned that no man looks upon a woman as a human being like himself. To a man a woman is something that belongs to himself or some other man.

"Women no more look up to men as their masters but men have never gotten beyond looking upon women more or less as their property. She is either his mother, his daughter, his sister, his sweetheart or his wife, or he recognizes her as standing in one of these relations to some other man. She is never free and her own.

"In all the time I was thrown in contact with men, those who tried to pay attention to me always asked, 'Who is the other man?' when I refused their offers. Not one of them could conceive a situation where a woman would rather 'flock by herself' than be with him.

"This is of course the conclusions of a mature mind that has learned much from those girlish experiences, but I wish girls—girls who work—would think a little more before they give themselves up to a good time.

"Oh, yes, I know the temptation. No one knows better than I the desperation of mind and loneliness of heart, when one would talk to almost any man for the sake of feeling that she is really living in a world with other human beings.

"I never can find it in my heart, Margie, to censure any girl I see sitting across the table in a restaurant or in the back seat of an automobile with a good-looking young man, even if any one can see that the man comes from a very different class of society from the girl. I have been so lonely, so unhappy and so desperate for the joys and pleasures of other young girls that honestly at times I contemplated paying the price.

"Don't look shocked, my dear, for you do not know what loneliness means, You, Margie, had a place made for you in the schools before your mother died, and soon after you married Dick.

"I don't know whether it is some lingering tradition of woman's dependence or just the longing of all humanity for the solace and comfort that comes from contact with another soul, but I believe that while curiosity is the greatest of all tempters to a man, loneliness is the greatest to a woman."

DOINGS OF THE DUFFS—(IT'S A GOOD THING HELEN IS COMING HOME.)—BY ALLMAN.